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ABSTRACT

This videotape explores the influence of electronic media on children's cognitive development. Posing the "cyberworld" as both a window to the greater world and a mirror to the students' world, the first part of the video examines electronic media and the brain's response systems. This part notes the brain's two response systems--the cortex, or reflective, and the cerebellum, or fast, stress responses such as hunger satisfaction, sexual responses, and "fight or flight." This section notes that electronic media tends to exploit this fast, emotion/fear system (violence, sexuality, food) rather than the slow, reflective part of the brain. The video concludes that children safely grounded in the real world will make a distinction between their reality and the one portrayed in the media, whereas children from violent, unpredictable, and/or sexualized environments will bring that sense of immediacy to the electronic media and be influenced accordingly. The video concludes by posing four questions for discussion: (1) How can we best facilitate children's exploration of their natural world to develop the neurons necessary for processing it, and to explore the cyberworld to develop its required coping skills? (2) What can be done to speed up schools' shift to electronic media as primary communication tools? (3) How can we best deal with real-world elements of violence and sexuality in media? and (4) How can we balance children's needs to master computer skills with the dangers of what they might encounter (e.g., controlled databases, pornography, false identities). The accompanying discussion guide provides background and supplementary material for leading a discussion after viewing the video. (HTH)

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